



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

February 22, 2006

# News Release

## **ICE AND NCIS TARGET GROUP OF U.S. MARINES AND CIVILIANS THAT STOLE IRAQ-BOUND BALLISTIC VESTS FROM MILITARY BASE FOR RESALE**

***9 arrested including several U.S. Marines; 1 suspect exported vests to ICE agents posing as arms brokers***

SAN DIEGO -- Julie L. Myers, Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced that ICE has teamed up with criminal investigators from the Department of Defense to dismantle a group that stole ballistic vests and other controlled U.S. military items destined for U.S. troops in Iraq from a California military base. Some of the ballistic vests were later resold via the Internet and illegally exported to ICE agents posing as international arms merchants.

Thus far, nine individuals including several enlisted U.S. Marines at Camp Pendleton, California have been arrested as part of the ongoing investigation by agents from ICE, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) in Philadelphia and Camp Pendleton. Several additional suspects in the investigation are believed to be serving with the U.S. military in Iraq.

“At a time when our troops in Iraq need all the body armor they can get, it is extremely troubling to see bulletproof vests destined for those troops being stolen from our military bases at home for resale to the public. It is even more troubling that individuals would try to sell these items for profit to people they believed were international arms dealers,” said ICE Assistant Secretary Myers.

“This case goes straight to the heart of force protection – the main mission of NCIS,” said NCIS spokesman Ed Buice. “We will continue to partner with ICE and other agencies around the world to safeguard our troops, especially those on the front lines who are depending on gear such as these vests to save their lives.”

Those arrested include Vista, California resident and civilian Erika Jardine. Today, Erika Jardine was sentenced in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania to six months incarceration, followed by three years supervised release, 250 hours of community service per year for two years and a \$6,500 fine for violating Title 22 USC, Section 2778 (export of U.S. munitions without a license) and Title 18 USC Section 641 (selling U.S. property) by the Honorable Judge Michael Baylson.

ICE agents in Philadelphia launched their investigation of Jardine in June 2004 after she was discovered selling controlled U.S. technology to bidders on the Internet via eBay. DCIS agents targeting the illegal sale of Small Arms Protective Inserts (SAPIs) and Outer Tactical Vests (OTVs) first discovered Jardine’s

activities. During the undercover ICE probe, Jardine knowingly sold and illegally exported 18 of these stolen military ballistic vests to ICE agents who told her they were arms merchants based overseas.

The OTV is a ballistic vest consisting of a Kevlar weave. SAPIs are lightweight ceramic plates that can be placed in the front and rear pockets of OTVs to provide additional protection to the chest and back area. When used with the OTVs, the SAPI is designed to protect the user from high-velocity, high-impact ammunition. The OTV and SAPI are used by U.S. military personnel around the globe. They are made exclusively for the U.S. government and are not for sale to the public. There are no legal channels for non-military or non-law enforcement sales.

On November 15, 2004, ICE agents and defense investigators arrested Jardine and executed search warrants on her residence in Vista, California and on her e-mail provider. Jardine was later charged in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania with illegally exporting SAPIs without the required State Department license. On November 9, 2005, Jardine pleaded guilty in Philadelphia to one count of violating the Arms Export Control Act and one count of selling stolen U.S. government property.

Information developed as a result of the Jardine case led agents to several U.S. Marines stationed at Camp Pendleton who had previously sold both SAPIs and OTVs to Jardine. ICE, NCIS, DCIS investigators then began working with the North County Regional Gang Task Force in San Diego to target civilians and members of the military who were involved in the possession and distribution of stolen government property.

The subsequent investigation at Camp Pendleton, led by NCIS, focused on identifying the amount and type of U.S. military gear being stolen. It also sought to take immediate, proactive measures to disrupt the illegal activity and reduce the impact of the thefts on the operational readiness of Camp Pendleton troops that were preparing for combat deployments in Iraq and other locations.

In total, the NCIS investigation at Camp Pendleton has identified 12 U.S. Marine Corps suspects, as well as several civilians. Thus far, NCIS agents at Camp Pendleton have arrested eight individuals, including several U.S. Marines, on charges of stealing government property.

In addition, the investigation has resulted in the recovery or purchase of items worth more than \$63,100, including: 104 SAPI plates, 14 OTVs, 7 Kevlar helmets, 3 fragmentation vests, 74 M-16 magazines, 2 gas masks, and 100,766 Iraqi dinars.

Additional arrests in this ongoing investigation are expected.

#### **# ICE #**

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*